



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

MEMORANDUM

APR 29 1997

TO: Pearlle S. Reed
Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration

Paul Johnson, Chairman
National Food and Agriculture Council

FROM: Richard E. Rominger
Deputy Secretary *Rack*

SUBJECT: Policy for Integration of Space and Operations of USDA Field Offices

The General Services Administration (GSA) recently awarded a contract to construct a new State Office in Davis, California, which will house the Farm Services Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development, as well as, the Risk Management Agency (RMA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Forest Service (FS) and Office of the Inspector General (OIG). It is my understanding that the involved State agency heads are working with the space planners on each agency's requirements. Before this process gets too far along, I want to be sure we understand the importance of achieving the most cost effective and customer friendly facilities, especially when we are investing in new facilities.

As we are all well aware, the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Act), Public Law 103-354, requires combining field offices to reduce personnel and duplicative overhead expenses, and the joint use of resources and offices.

SEC. 215. COMBINATION OF FIELD OFFICES

(a) Combination of Offices Required.—Where practicable and to the extent consistent with efficient, effective, and improved service, the Secretary shall combine field offices of agencies within the Department to reduce personnel and duplicative overhead expenses.

(b) Joint Use of Resources and Offices Required.—When two or more agencies of the Department share a common field office, the Secretary shall require the agencies to jointly use office space, equipment, office supplies, administrative personnel, and clerical personnel associated with that field office.

For the purposes of implementing the Act, all offices other than headquarters are to be considered field offices. This means regional, state, area, district and local offices (USDA Service Centers), whether they are program delivery, administrative or special purpose, e.g., technical support or research, are considered field offices.

The National Food and Agriculture Council (FAC) Subcommittee on USDA Service Centers issued, USDA Service Center Space and Equipment Guidance, dated October 13, 1995. The guidance required the following when planning and building new space:

- Primary customer access is through a common entrance for all agencies into a common reception area;
- Shared space for supplies, storage, mail room, conference room, shared equipment, and other uses;
- Shared common office equipment (i.e., copier, fax, telephone system, mail meter); duplicate equipment should be disposed of, if no longer serviceable, to obtain single pieces of equipment that can be shared by all;
- Space accommodations for non-federal partners, local cooperators, and county employees;
- Minimal architectural barriers between agencies to enhance communication flow and allow flexibility and ease of installing and modifying wiring for telecommunications systems;
- Privacy for supervisory and confidential client information discussions;
- Flexible floor plan;
- A common telecommunications system for voice, local area network, and wide area network; wiring can be included in the lease and amortized over the life of the lease;
- Outdoor and indoor signs identifying the location as a USDA Service Center with identification for individual agencies and partner organizations as appropriate;
- All applicable rules and regulations pertaining to accessibility for the disabled will be followed.

Subsequent policy guidance has been issued in areas such as signage and telecommunications, with the deployment of the LAN/WAN/Voice project.

We need to establish similar guidance for all field offices, and across all USDA agencies. Therefore, I am charging the Assistant Secretary for Administration to work with the Subcabinet and the National FAC to ensure that a consistent Department-wide policy on sharing of space, equipment and personnel, where multiple USDA agencies are collocated, is in place and in force no later than August 1, 1997.

In the interim, for the State Office in California, or any other new shared field office, please insure that we at a minimum require:

- A common primary entrance and reception area where customers can be courteously and effectively directed to any of the agencies present in the facility;

- A shared telecommunications system based on the LAN/WAN/Voice project and optimized across all USDA and other federal agencies present or in nearby facilities;
- A shared common computer facility with coordinated support to ensure a smooth migration to a common computing environment;
- Shared space and common location of administrative functions, equipment and staff, e.g., printing, copying, mail, storage, supplies, etc.;
- A generally "open space" approach, with privacy as required, but provided with consistency across all agencies, and consistent with General Services Administration guidelines.

Please recommend any additional interim guidance that may be needed and provide me regular progress reports on the development and implementation of Department-wide policy.

cc: Subcabinet
CIO
CFO
OBPA